towards the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty by establishing a high-level expert preparatory group in Geneva. It will build on the work carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts to make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to but not negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and its outcome document (see A/70/81).

4. In its report, the Group of Governmental Experts clearly demonstrated that, although important differences in perspective remain, the various perspectives of States on a treaty should not be a substantive obstacle to preventing the start of negotiations and could be overcome if there is the political will to do so.

5. We are gravely concerned, however, about the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and the dim prospects for fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations in that forum, despite it being the will of the overwhelming majority of Member States.

6. Under such circumstances, it is important that we seize every opportunity to achieve real progress towards fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations. Consequently, the Initiative attaches fundamental importance to supporting and promoting the work of the high-level expert preparatory group, which will be established in Geneva, and to the informal consultative meetings in New York, with a view to advancing the actual commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Reasons to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty

7. There are compelling reasons to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty. The benefits are potentially vast, since such a treaty would:

(a) Offer a unique opportunity to establish a non-discriminatory treaty regime by creating equal obligations for nuclear-weapon possessor States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike;

(b) Help to cap the quantitative nuclear arms race and instil new momentum into the process of nuclear disarmament, thereby furthering the implementation of key provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty;

(c) Contribute to the implementation of article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty;

(d) Reinforce the non-proliferation obligations and norms in the Non-Proliferation Treaty;

(e) Enhance nuclear material security, namely, security, control and accounting regarding fissile material, including reducing the risk of the potential acquisition of fissile material by non-State actors;

(f) Establish transparency with regard to nuclear facilities where transparency does not yet exist, by providing an opportunity for nuclear-weapon possessor States to demonstrate, and be accountable for, the security of their nuclear weapons facilities in a responsible manner;

(g) Help to establish baselines for further nuclear disarmament and form a potential building block for the verification thereof;

(h) Create the conditions for drawing additional States into the multilateral non-proliferation regime;

(i) Contribute, if universalized, to regional security and stability, particularly in South Asia, in the Middle East and on the Korean Peninsula.

High-level expert preparatory group

8. The Initiative highly welcomes the fact that the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/259, requested the Secretary-General to establish a high-level expert preparatory group to make recommendations on substantial elements of a future fissile material cut-off treaty, including by revisiting the report of the Group of Governmental Experts contained in document A/70/81. In our view, the newly established high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group should strive for an outcome that clearly advances the work already carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts.

9. The Initiative also welcomes links between the work of the high-level expert preparatory group and the Conference on Disarmament, so as to facilitate the transfer of work back to that forum should it agree upon and implement a balanced and comprehensive programme of work that includes the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Ultimately, it is our expectation that the Conference on Disarmament will be in a position to integrate the recommendations of the high-level expert preparatory group into its work, since all members of the Conference on Disarmament have previously agreed on a mandate to negotiate such a treaty. The continuing importance and relevance of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as the past achievements of that body in successfully negotiating arms control and disarmament agreements, should therefore be kept in mind throughout the process.

10. Pending the entry into force of a fissile material cut-off treaty, we urge all nuclear-weapon States and the States not party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to maintain or declare moratoriums on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices. As negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty have yet to start after so many years, there is a need to create, on an urgent basis, a de facto fissile material cut-off treaty world, which would then facilitate negotiations on, and the conclusion of, a fissile material cut-off treaty. The effectiveness and significance of moratoriums in accelerating actual treaty negotiations have already been proved by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty negotiations and the preceding moratoriums on nuclear testing.